Nestle told to pay fine over ash in Maggi noodles

Authorities of Shahjanhanpur, Uttar Pradesh, have imposed a fine of Rs 45 lakh on Nestle India for higher-than-permissible ash content in samples of Maggi noodles.

New Delhi: Nestle India Ltd, a unit of Swiss packaged food company Nestle SA, has been told to pay a fine after a Lucknow-based laboratory found ash content higher than the permissible limit in samples of Maggi noodles, the company’s biggest revenue earner.
A Nestle India spokesperson however denied that any ash was added to Maggi noodles, calling the product “100% safe” and saying the relevant samples were from 2015.

The additional district magistrate of Shahjanhanpur, Uttar Pradesh, has imposed a fine of Rs45 lakh on Nestle India, Rs15 lakh on three of the company’s distributors and Rs11 lakh on two retailers, PTI reported on Tuesday.

People familiar with the matter said seven samples were collected for testing by district administrations in 2015. After the laboratory report was released in 2016, seven cases were lodged at the additional district magistrate’s court.

A Nestle India spokesperson said, “We wish to reassure our consumers that MAGGI Noodles are 100% safe for consumption. We strongly reiterate that at no stage of the manufacturing process, ASH is added to MAGGI Noodles. It is a case of applying standards basis an old advisory issued in 2015. Now, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has laid standards for Instant Noodles, Pasta and Seasoning. MAGGI noodles are fully compliant with this. While we have not yet received the order passed by the Adjudication Officer, we understand from the information available that the relevant samples are of the year 2015 and the issue pertains to “Ash content”.

FSSAI had in May 2015 had ordered a recall of Maggi noodles and banned its production and sale on allegations it contained excess lead and monosodium glutamate.

In 2015, Nestle India and other companies had represented to the relevant authorities, via industry associations, to set standards specific to instant noodles to avoid confusion amongst enforcement officers and consumers, the spokesperson said, adding, “The standards have since been introduced and the product complies with these standards. We regret the confusion it may cause to consumers.”

The food and drug administration in Uttar Pradesh was the first to question Nestle’s Maggi noodles in 2015 which later lead to a nationwide ban on Maggi noodles forcing Nestle to destroy about 38,000 tonne of the noodles.

Nestle India, however, managed to mend fences with FSSAI and in September, the two jointly inaugurated the Nestle Food Safety Institute that would offer training to FSSAI officials and food companies on food safety.